EDITORIALS

LAST WORDS ON THE CAMPUS

On thousands of school and college campuses, under elm and maple, palm and pine, the massed and mortared youth of America has been getting its last formal advice. Every commencement orator tries to say something new, true or useful. Some succeed. But all, if only by filling up the vast and varied canvas of this nationwide ceremony, throw some light on the process that made them speak—the endless, formless, fertile, wasteful, wonderful process of American education.

Listen first to a former governor of Louisiana, Sam H. Jones, addressing the Negro graduates of Washington High School in Lake Charles, La. He talked to them mostly as Americans, not Negroes, but he added, "by way of factual information," that "the 15 million American Negroes will produce this year more college graduates than all of the British kingdom with its [illegible] people." He also told them that "the American Negro may well become the most important segment of the world population in the coming struggle between the forces of Communism and Democracy. This is true because the forces of world Communism seek to enroll all the colored races, black, yellow, red and brown, underneath their banner. And there are none, among the colored races, better able to advance the cause of democracy among these people than the American Negro. Thus, a great opportunity, not given in such degree to other Americans, lies ahead for you."

Perhaps the newsiest speech of the commencement season was given by Allen Dulles, head of our Central Intelligence Agency, to the alumni of Columbia University. He described education in the Soviet Union, of which there is a great deal. More than half of all Soviet college graduates specialize in the physical sciences (in the U.S., about 20%). There has been a small but significant "de-emphasis" of ideological studies, said Dulles, which is [illegible] among former strongholds of Marxist dogma such as biology and agriculture. "In introducing mass education, the troubled Soviet leaders have loosed forces dangerous to themselves."

Dulles believes that "some thoughtful Soviet citizens," taught to apply elementary logic to the natural world, are beginning to apply it to their political environment as well. Thus "a hard choice faces the perplexed and probably unharmonious group of men in the Kremlin." They can attempt to turn the clock back to the "dark ages" of Stalinist conformism—"no easy task"—or they must let the educated Russian spirit continue its discovery of non-Communist realities.

Americans would certainly like to believe this, for it vindicates our faith in the sovereign virtues of education. That faith was reasserted by, among others, Federal Judge Charles E. Wyzanski to the ladies of Wellesley College. He spoke on what he thought they would accomplish by 1980. One of his predictions: they would help save the public schools. Disturbed by the overgrown classes, the impaired quality and low esteem of the teacher, the Wellesley girls would step forward and persuade the school boards "to engage you as part-time teachers," thus giving the calling of the local teachers a renewed sense of style.

At Whitman College in Walla Walla, President C. C. Maxey voiced some thoughts on what a good teacher must be. He must be a scholar but more than a scholar, his mind "a fountain, not a reservoir." He must know how to win the student's vagrant attention through an "intellectual ascendancy . . . which instructs but does not enslave." He must be a model "in every utterance and every deed . . . even though he may prefer it, the back seat is not for the teacher. . . . When there is something to be done which strengthens literacy unaided cannot accomplish, [the teacher] is committed for service and for a leadership which only men of high education can supply." The good teacher must be a free man. But "the greater his freedom from external compulsions the more exposed he is to the subtle tyrannies of his own personal Pharisaisms. He will not overcome these by merely professing high ideals. Every day of his life he must work hard, far harder than other men, to widen his knowledge, dethrone his prejudices and rectify his judgments."

Dr. Maxey's rigorous standard applies to the educated man in any calling. And because that standard has been set, and is here and there maintained, there was a sense of hope and purpose on the American campus this June. In fact Dr. Charles Malik, Lebanon's ambassador to the U.S., told the seniors of Ohio Wesleyan that the U.S. "intellectual and spiritual scene has never been more vigorous or more hopeful." He could say so partly because American education is not wholly ruled by its temporary aristocrats, the scientists and the specialists. Against them the liberal arts college is holding its own; and from its studies, said Malik, "the soul emerges with some unity of vision, some coherence of purpose, some freedom of spirit, some mastery over its own elementary powers, some joy in the knowledge of responsible theory, some humility before the mystery of being."